Volume 9 Issue 4 (2025) Pages 1077-1086
Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini
ISSN: 2549-8959 (Online) 2356-1327 (Print)

Implementation of The Sorogan Baca Program to Strengthen Early Childhood Pre-Reading Ability

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DOI: 10.31004/obsesi.v9i4.6927

Abstract
This study aims to explore the application of the sorogan baca method in improving pre-reading skills among early childhood learners at TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. This study involved teachers and students as its main subjects. The findings of the study indicate that the sorogan baca program improved children's pre-reading skills, providing them with a strong foundation for the transition to elementary school. Program improvement was observed in areas such as phonological awareness, letter recognition, and the ability to blend letters into meaningful words. The aspect of phonological awareness is seen in children, for example when they are asked to read or pronounce vowels with a loud and clear voice. The aspect of letter recognition is shown in this sorogan baca activity when the teacher pronounces certain letters, then the students will point to which shape/letter is meant. And the ability to combine letters into meaningful words can be seen through the child's ability to match all sounds with the right letters, know the letters in the word, and understand the word. In addition, this program provides an alternative model for strengthening early literacy by adopting a pesantren cultural approach that is very close to the community. However, it does not ignore the concept of playing in early childhood learning. This fosters an interesting learning environment and encourages active participation of children..

Keywords: *early childhood, pre-reading ability, phonology awareness, sorogan baca.*

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Received 5 March 2025, Accepted 20 April 2025, Published 20 April 2025

Introduction

Reading ability is one of the fundamental skills that every individual must have, especially at an early age. Ideally, children enter formal education with a strong basic of pre-reading skills, such as phonological skills, letter recognition, and understanding basic language concepts. Good pre-reading skills will make it easier for children to develop further literacy skills, which are very important for their academic success at various levels of education (Cooper et al., 2014; Logan et al., 2013). Early literacy development, including pre-reading skills, is the foundation that determines children's academic future. The importance of reading is also emphasized in the Qur'an, Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1-5. The first revelation begins with the command iqra', meaning "Read!", highlighting the significance of reading as a critical skill that individuals must acquire, which needs to be stimulated from an early age.

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Pre-reading abilities play a crucial role in children's literacy development (Suharti et al., 2018; Ulu & Akyol, 2016). Children who enter school with well-developed pre-reading abilities are better prepared to learn to read and are more likely to excel in literacy-related tasks (Jones & Christensen, 2022; Mues et al., 2023). Furthermore, pre-reading skills are linked to overall academic achievement, as strong reading abilities are essential for success across various subjects (Eren-Zaffar, 2020). Reading is an important skill for children to learn at all levels of education because it contributes to their overall intelligence development (Rena et al., 2023; Salam et al., 2023). Subject matter will only be understood by students if they read it. Thus, reading greatly helps someone in understanding the subject being studied.

However, many young children enter elementary school without adequate pre-reading abilities, which can hinder their academic success and future reading development. Empirical data shows that the interest and initial reading ability in early childhood, especially in pre-reading skills, is still low (Prasetia et al., 2022). Several studies show that many Indonesian children are unable to understand simple reading or apply basic mathematical concepts (Direktorat PAUD, Dikdas dan Dikmen, 2021). This finding is based on the results of a survey conducted by PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) that Indonesian people's literacy is still relatively low and needs to be improved (Amir et al., 2023; Tiarina et al., 2022). Indonesia is ranked last out of 40 countries in reading performance with a total score of 371 and ranked last out of 41 countries in mathematics (OECD, 2021). This indicates that many children do not have literacy readiness from an early age, which has an impact on their academic achievement later in life.

Improving pre-reading skills should be a priority in early childhood education. Appropriate interventions, such as the introduction of effective methods and programs, are essential to building a strong literacy foundation. Adopting innovative educational materials to support early literacy development is essential (Hayyu et al., 2024; Rena et al., 2023). Kindergartens play an important role in equipping children with basic reading skills. TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo, one of the educational institutions in the Malang area, East Java, has developed an innovative Sorogan Baca Program to face these challenges. This program is designed to help children develop pre-reading skills through the sorog method or listening to students reading in turns. This program adopts the sorog method which is usually held in Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren). The sorogan method is a traditional method of learning "kitab" where students (santri) come to kyai in turns to read, explain, or memorize the lessons given previously (Ulfa, 2022). This method is usually used in Islamic boarding schools to study “kitab” (kitab kuning). Several studies have been conducted to explore this sorogan method. In several studies, it was shown that the sorogan method was considered effective in teaching “kitab” to students (Arifin et al., 2022; Hasibuan et al., 2018; Mukhlishotin, 2019; Nur Handayani & Suismanto, 2019; Reksa & Rachmah, 2022; Rodiah, 2019; Ulfa, 2022).

In the context of this study, pre-reading skills refer to the basic skills needed before a child can develop more advanced reading skills. These include oral language, listening comprehension, phonological awareness, print skills, and alphabet knowledge (Cooper et al., 2014). The Sorogan Baca method is more widely applied in Islamic boarding schools. Even in the context of early childhood education, the sorogan method has been used in learning the Qur'an (Nur Handayani & Suismanto, 2019). However, there is still a lack of research specifically examining the application of the *sorogan* method in developing pre-reading skills in early childhood education institutions. Most studies have focused on conventional literacy approaches, such as phonics or the whole language approach. Therefore, this study offers a novel perspective by adapting the *sorogan* method in the context of early childhood education at TK Muslimat NU 2 Sukolilo.

The uniqueness of this research lies in its combination of traditional approaches with modern teaching strategies to enhance pre-reading ability. TK Muslimat NU 2 Sukolilo applies this method to develop pre-reading ability almost eight years. This program combines traditional approaches with modern practices that focus on strengthening early literacy and

DOI: 10.31004/obsesi.v9i4.6927

providing concrete solutions to overcome the challenges of low pre-reading skills in early childhood education environments. This research is expected to contribute in improving children's basic literacy and become a model for other educational institutions in implementing similar programs.

This study aims to explain the implementation of the reading sorogan program in strengthening students' early reading ability to prepare them for entering elementary school. In addition, it is hoped that the results of this study can be a model that can be adopted by other educational institutions in developing children's literacy skills.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach to describe the phenomenon of sorogan baca program at the TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo Malang, East Java. This approach is used to obtain comprehensive data related to the study. This research was conducted on early childhood ages 5-6 years. At this age, children are in the process of preparing to enter elementary school. The data sources in this study were teachers and students involved in the implementation of sorogan baca activities at TK Muslimat NU 1 Malang. This study involved 43 students and 2 teachers. Data was gathered through observation of the implementation of Sorogan Baca activities, interviews with teachers regarding the methods and benefits of the program, and document analysis related to the development of students' reading ability.

Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model stages consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusions. In the reduction process, the collected data is sorted based on categories that align with the research questions. To facilitate the identification of the reduced data, coding is performed. Subsequently, the data is presented to create a structured set of information that enables the drawing of conclusions and taking of actions. The presentation of the research data is in the form of narrative text.

Data validity is conducted using credibility through technique triangulation and source triangulation. Technique triangulation is performed by checking the same source using different techniques, namely, the data obtained from interviews will be rechecked by the researcher with documentation and observation. Meanwhile, source triangulation is done by verifying the data obtained through multiple sources. The data collected from various sources will then be described and categorized to identify similarities, differences, and specific perspectives from those data sources

Result and Discussion

Pre-reading ability is an essential skill that must be developed and nurtured in children. Therefore, TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo Jabung, has made breakthroughs and innovations to strengthen children's reading abilities through the Sorogan Baca program. TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo uses the Sorogan Baca Program, which emphasizes listening and habitual practice as a method to enhance early childhood reading skills. The program is designed to build a strong basic literacy, which is crucial for the early development of children's reading skills.

The team at TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo compiled learning media in the form of a book as a guide for teachers in assisting in reading sorogan activities. This book is namely Ayo Belajar Membaca. This book, “Ayo Belajar Membaca”, is modified by the TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo module team from a smart reading book “Buku Pintar Membaca (volumes 1–4)”. This activity is designed to be integrated into a series of school activities, although it is not formally included in the curriculum.

The Sorogan Baca activity involves a reading-learning process where each student takes turns reading aloud, while others listen, during breaks in the learning sessions (Nur Handayani & Suismanto, 2019). Good oral language skills from an early age greatly help children in mastering basic reading skills (Kennedy et al., 2012). Speaking out loud and then listening becomes an oral language activity that will help strengthen pre-reading ability. This

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activity has been a routine practice at TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo for eight years. The Sorogan Baca Program is an effective strategy implemented to improve the pre-reading abilities of students. Its implementation at TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo is a strategic effort aimed at enhancing children's reading ability at the pre-reading level.



Figure 1. The Guidance Book of the Sorogan Baca

This reading sorogan activity is integrated into students after 3 months they entered in TK B class (5-6 years old). Students will be given the learning book "Ayo Belajar Membaca" as a book to enrich students' reading skills. After students are fluent and proficient in reading, students will be given the reading learning book "I'm Smart at Reading" volumes 6-10. The "Ayo Belajar Membaca", the guidebook of the sorogan baca program, consists of 3 chapters. Each chapter This book is a reading guidebook that has been structured and used as a reference for the reading program. This book is also equipped with monitoring activities and evaluation of student's initial reading ability targets. The Sorogan Baca activity takes place alongside the core learning activities or project-based tasks.



Figure 2. The activity in the *Sorogan Baca* Program

Chapter I in the book "Ayo Belajar Membaca" focuses on learning the use of the vowel "A". Students start with words containing elements of the alphabet A - Z (the use of one word and one word using the suffix (patent letters). Chapter II focuses learning on the use of the vowel "I" starting from words containing elements of the alphabet A - Z with a more difficult word level than Chapter I. In Chapter III, learning focuses on the use of the vowel "U" starting from words containing elements of the alphabet A – Z with more difficult word levels than in Chapter II.

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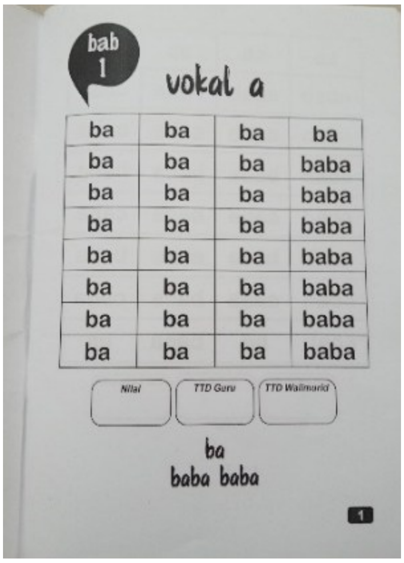


Figure 3. The content of "*Ayo Belajar Baca*" book

Furthermore, the evaluation is always followed up with motivational reinforcement. If students can pronounce letters fluently and correctly, then they are given a 4-star award without having to repeat the reading. The evaluation is carried out using a guidebook then when students can fluently pronounce the alphabet correctly, the students will be given 4 stars without repeating the reading. Teachers believe that each student has different abilities and learning speeds. However, they strive to ensure that the program's goals are achieved by motivating students. The 4-Star Award serves as a motivational tool for students. This approach is in line with the principles of early childhood education, where the role of educators in fostering learning motivation has a significant impact on students' attitudes, learning motivation, and values. As a result, students become more independent and confident (Alfiyyah, 2024).

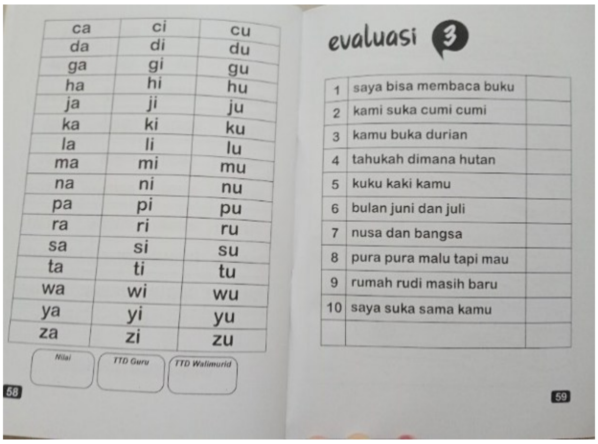


Figure 4. The Evaluation Step

Pre-reading ability is an important foundation for children's literacy skills in the future. This ability includes a series of basic skills that are an important start for children to read fluently. This ability refers to the skills and concepts that children acquire before they can read independently. The skills in pre-reading include children's knowledge of alphabet knowledge, concept of word, invented spelling, and word recognition (Lombardino et al., 1999). Pre-reading skills include how children can recognize and pronounce letters or numbers correctly (Rena et al., 2023). These skills include phonological awareness, knowledge of letter name

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sounds, and rapid naming. Phonological awareness involves recognizing and manipulating sounds in language, while letter knowledge helps build connections between written symbols and spoken language (Rivera et al., 2022).

In addition, rapid naming reflects the speed at which phonological information is accessed from visual cues. Pre-reading ability is an initial skill that children must master before they enter elementary school. During preschool, children receive stimulation to prepare them for elementary school education. when they later go to elementary school. Pre-reading ability in a programmed manner to pre-elementary school children. This program is a form of attention to whole words, meaningful in the context of children's personalities and materials provided through interesting games and activities as a means of learning.

Sorogan Baca Program is a reading learning activity using the sorog method or the technique of listening to reading one by one by students in turns in between learning times. The individual approach applied to early childhood is indeed very vulnerable to the hustle and bustle caused by other children who have not had a turn (Nur Handayani & Suismanto, 2019). However, to anticipate this, several activities have been prepared to provide activities for children while waiting for their turn, such as coloring, playing puzzles and others.

The implementation of sorogan baca activities is an effective strategy applied to strengthen pre-reading ability. Based on reading competence, several basic processes in reading occur in the sorogan baca program, including:

Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness is an understanding that speech consists of various individual sounds. The sorogan baca method introduces phonemes or sounds to children by getting them used to reading loudly and clearly. For example, children are asked to pronounce the vowels A-I-U-E-O which are part of mouth gymnastics activities. From this activity, the child's ability to pronounce letters becomes more fluent and clearer. Besides that, the guidebook of the sorogan baca program, in chapter 1, introduces the vowel letter A by combining it with other consonants. Blevins (2016) states that teaching vowels in combination with consonants is the best way to start pre-reading ability for children (Levin et al., 2023). The teacher will listen and correct the phonemes pronounced by the students.

This shows that children's phonemic awareness is increasingly formed. This is a very important thing because, according to previous research, phonological awareness is a better predictor of pre-reading ability (Ghasoub et al., 2024). Children who enter school with well-developed pre-reading skills will be better prepared to learn to read and more likely to excel at literacy-related tasks (Jones & Christensen, 2022; Mues et al., 2023).

Phonological awareness refers to the recognition of words consisting of sound units or phonemes and can have syllables. The manual used by teachers to strengthen pre-reading ability contains components that can stimulate phonemic awareness in children. It should be noted that preschool children rely more on phonological decoding and processing during the early stages of reading instruction (Hogan et al., 2005). Therefore, teachers need to help develop children's phonemic awareness by correcting incorrect phonemes so that children understand the speech of individual sounds. Vocabulary knowledge is not part of general basic skills but is language-specific in its value to reading ability (Giguere et al., 2024).

Alphabet Awareness

Alphabet Awareness is a child's understanding of the shape of letters. One aspect of a child's reading readiness is knowing and understanding the alphabet. A child is not only able to pronounce/read, but the child must be able to do more than just reading, namely the child can identify sounds in the language (phonemes) that match the intended letter. Having phonological awareness in the process of teaching early reading to children has an impact on the development of students' reading abilities. By having phonological awareness, students automatically have letter recognition and can pronounce words easily and correctly (Sari, 2016). In this reading sorogan activity, the teacher will pronounce certain letters, then the

DOI: 10.31004/obsesi.v9i4.6927

students will point to which shapes/letters are meant. For example, if the teacher mentions the letter /d/, then the students will be asked to point to which letter is meant. Students who were taught directly through oral activities tend to achieve better outcomes than those who developed phonemic awareness later through interaction with letters in phonics instruction (Bdeir et al., 2022).

Blending Letters and Sound Awareness

Blending Letters and Sound Awareness means that children can match all sounds with the correct letters and know the intended letter. In this case, reading requires more complex competencies. Children must be able to connect the intended words with letters. Through the Sorogan Baca activity, children can have word awareness from the sounds of words through the words in the guidebook. An example is the word "buku", children can identify if the word "buku" consists of four alphabet sounds /b/ /u/ /k/ /u/. Children can also imagine what "buku" is.

This illustrates how children can identify the sounds in the word and associate those sounds with the appropriate letters. This is an important step in the development of reading skills and phonemic awareness. In addition, this example shows that word comprehension is not only limited to recognizing sounds but also to the meaning of the word. Children not only learn how to pronounce the word "buku," but also understand that the word refers to a physical object of the word.

The sorogan method, when viewed from its implementation, can be categorized as individual learning. It is a system of learning where a student faces a teacher directly (Nur Handayani & Suismanto, 2019). With such a learning system, the teacher can interact with the student, observe the development of the student's abilities, such as accuracy in reading, understanding the content, and expressing the reading material according to each student's uniqueness.

However, one of the main limitations of individual methods is the intensity of its resources. Implementing individual education requires significant time, effort, and resources, as educators must develop and tailor instruction for each child. This can be a challenge, especially in environments with limited funds or where educators do not have the necessary training and support (Coelho et al., 2024). Effective implementation of individual methods requires well-trained educators who can adapt their teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of each child.

Nevertheless, the application of the sorogan method as an individual learning approach in this context is very helpful for teachers in understanding their students with all their limitations. By continuously evaluating the process and outcomes of the program, it will certainly help address various challenges faced.

Conclussion

Sorogan Baca is a reading learning activity using the sorog method, a listening method of students reading, to strengthen the pre-reading ability of the student. Children's interest and involvement in this activity also showed positive results, with very active participation. The sorogan baca activity at TK Muslimat NU 1 Sukolilo has a positive impact on the development of the pre-reading ability of students.

The identifiable impacts that emerge with the existence of the sorogan baca program related to pre-reading ability are: 1) phonological awareness increases as indicated by the child's ability to pronounce letters becomes more fluent and clear; 2) students' alphabet awareness improves as indicated by the student's ability to follow the teacher's instructions in pointing out letters; 3) Students' word blending improves as indicated by the emergence of students' ability to blend letters into syllables and words.

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This program can serve as a model for replication in other schools in regions with similar cultural backgrounds, as well as a recommendation for further development, such as integrating the program into the early childhood education curriculum or developing training for teachers in the implementation of the sorogan baca method.

Acknowledgement

This article is the final project of the research program in faculty. Therefore, we thank you for the guidance and support in the chance and material provided by the faculty and the institute.

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